Letter from Taizé

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Summer 1987
Intercontinental Meetings
at Taizé

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Letter from Madras

Where would we be today, if women, men, and even children, had not come forward at times when humanity seemed to be heading for the worst? They held on to a fine hope in humanity and to an invisible presence.

They found a way to go beyond personal conflicts and to cross the barriers which separate nations and people of different spiritual families or races. They perceived, rising up from the heart of the peoples of the earth, an aspiration to a fullness of joy and peace, but also an endless lamentation.

As for you, are you going to let yourself fall asleep in dull indifference? If you are dismayed by the mistrust that exists between nations and by the wounds left by broken human relationships, will you let your lips and your heart become frozen in an attitude of: "What's the use, we can do nothing, let things take their course."

Are you going to let yourself sink into discouragement like Elijah, a believer of times gone by, who, seeing that he could do nothing more for his people, lay down under a tree to fall asleep and forget?[1]

Or will you remain awake? You have a long journey ahead of you. Will you take your place among those women, men and children who have decided to act?

They possess unsuspected strengths. By their very simplicity, their lives speak to us. They foster sharing and solidarity, ▷

A telegram sent by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Brother Roger :

"At this end of this year which has been dedicated to youth and at the moment when you are preparing to gather tens of thousands of young people in Madras and Barcelona, inviting them to sow trust where there is hatred and to help to build a world of peace and justice, I request you to tell these young people that the United Nations is ceaselessly pursuing its task with a view to building that better world to which we aspire, and that we count very much on their trust, their prayers and their support. I have an excellent memory of our meeting last summer in Geneva and I hope that you will keep me informed about what happens at the meetings in Madras and Barcelona.

Javier Perez de Cuellar"

Bridging the end of 1985 and the New Year, there have been two successive meetings: first of all in India, where a "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth" gathered young adults from all India and other parts of the world in MADRAS. Then in Spain, BARCELONA was this year the host city for the "European Meeting", a gathering of some 20,000 young adults from all parts of Europe, which has previously been held in Rome, London, Paris and Cologne.

Several brothers of Taizé went to live in Madras more than a year beforehand to prepare the meeting there. After writing the letters below, Brother Roger went to join his brothers to share in the life in a crowded district of the city, and to lead the meeting. From there, he went directly to Barcelona for the European Meeting.

Brother Roger writes : "Being in India and among people of the East allows one to discover a waiting on God which goes back a very long way in the history of humanity. For thousands of years, this expectant waiting has led believers of different religions to hold themselves in the presence of God; through it the Christians of the East have discovered a sense of worship.

"Do the peoples of India and the East realize that the currents of thought which influence the other peoples of the world can be changed, transformed and even transfigured? History does leave room for the force of intuition to play its part. Without rejecting the laws of determinism which are fundamental to their research, some scientists today, including agnostics, are discerning limits and gaps: an element which is unforseeable and unpredictable. The ablest researchers are now presenting the era of determinism with a certain humility. It could well be that we will move into a 21st Century of deep faith."

1. 900 years before Christ, the prophet Elijah was faced with disillusionment and despair. Perhaps he was still young, no-one knows. Discouraged, he sat down under a tree and said to God, "I have had enough, take my life." And he fell asleep. Twice, God sent someone to wake him and say, "Get up Elijah, and eat, you have a long journey ahead of you." Elijah got up and, strengthened by that food, travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached the mountain where he would meet God. (1 Kings 19)

and dispel the paralysis of indifference. They disarm mistrust and hatred. They are bearers of trust and reconciliation. Knowing that God does not wish armed conflicts or any other human suffering, they take action.[2] By doing all they can to make the world a place fit to live in, by understanding with a trusting heart and living by forgiveness, they become creators with God.

If a passion to forgive became a burning flame within you, you would be kindling a spark of communion that reaches even the most tragic situations.

Do we not realize that God wants us to be creators with him. He has accepted a huge risk: he has wanted human beings not to be like passive robots, but free to decide on the direction their lives will take. He leaves us free to forgive, but free also to reject forgiveness; free to create with God or not.

The depths of the human being are limitless. They open towards the depths of God.[3] And God is already there waiting for every person, deep within them. It is there that creative energy is born.

Can there be no miracles on earth? – yet love which forgives is one. It opens a whole new space before you and you find yourself free, completely free. You sense within you something that is of God and which cannot ever wear out. The contemplation of God's forgiveness gives rise to a radiant goodness in the simple hearts of those who let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Risen Christ, invisibly present, could speak in this way: 'I know that you sometimes go through monotony and darkness. But I can tell you this: I am in you, beside you, and in front of you. "Happy those who trust without having seen."'[4]

You doubt and say to yourself: the fire in me is going out. But you were not the one who lit the fire. It is not your faith which creates God, nor can your doubts banish him to nothingness.

Faith means trusting simply in God – a trust so simple that it is open to everyone.

If one's heart is attentive, trust in God makes it possible to manage with very little.

With this little, God brings about what really matters and everything is simplified in oneself, including one's way of living and way of approaching others.

Completely simple too and stripped of all pretensions remains your humble prayer of self-giving. And all through life, who is not surprised to find themselves saying to God, "Listen to my prayer, the prayer of a child"?[5] Day after day, inner struggles continue. Struggle and contemplation come together. ▷

2. In recent years there has been an unprecedented awakening of the Christian conscience with regard to human rights. This awakening has been happening at different rates in different places: the same evolutions never take place everywhere at once. In one of the richest countries of the world, Church leaders are setting out a new "economic right" concerned with housing, health, and adequate nutrition, which they are placing on the same level as all other human rights.

3. Psalm 42.8

4. One of Jesus' disciples, Thomas, expressed his doubt. He was not ready to believe in the resurrection of Christ unless he could not only see Jesus but also touch his wounds with his hand. And Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me, you believe (that is to say: you trust). Blessed are those who believe without having seen" (John 20.29). Tradition holds that Thomas is the disciple who evangelized India, and that he died at Madras.

5. Preparing a meeting in India has made us realize how many different forms prayer can take. During one's lifetime, there are periods when one prays without any words, everything happens in a deep silence. At other times, many words are necessary. Sometimes enthusiasm (enthusiasm means being taken hold of by God) can be rekindled by a liturgical prayer celebrated with others. How could we forget that in the East a form of personal prayer, consisting of the same few words constantly repeated, has sustained some believers their whole lives through? For centuries, the form of their prayer has been nothing other than continually calling to mind the presence of God. And this is true not only of Christians but also of believers of other religions. Such a prayer lies under the surface of gestures, of conversation, indeed of all life. This prayer, which originated in the East, became widespread among the Christians in the eastern part of Europe, giving rise for example to the "Jesus Prayer". Elsewhere, there is the prayer which begins "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you", or else simple chants which are sung over and over again.

In the East, there is also a gesture thousands of years old, which was adopted by the first Christians: St. Luke tells at the end of his Gospel how the Apostles "worshipped" the Lord, that is to say they prostrated themselves foreheads to the ground. In the East this gesture, which involves the whole person, stretched out, face down, for a long period of silence, already had the meaning of offering oneself to God.

6. The Spirit of God speaks without one necessarily feeling its presence. The One who is Risen is always present, in a mysterious way. The fact of feeling nothing, of there being no resonance within oneself, does not imply spiritual dryness. "Though you have not seen him, you love him" (1 Peter 1.8). During liturgical celebrations, praying somewhat like a child, we say, "Come, Holy Spirit." But at the same time we know that the Spirit is already there: present in us, praying within us, guiding us at every moment. The Holy Spirit never leaves us.

You would like to feel the presence of God and you have the impression that nothing is there. Do you realize that wherever there is forgiving love, God's presence is almost tangible. Though your heart has difficulty believing it, his Spirit is continually active within you.[6]

If you were to let a passion to forgive without delay burn within you,[7] you would be setting out on a spiritual adventure, the wonder of a love. God loved you before ever you loved him. You think you do not wait for him, and yet he is waiting for you. You say, "I am not worthy", and he places on your finger a ring of celebration, the ring of the prodigal son. That is the transformation of the Gospel.[8]

We are all prodigals! In the depths of your captivity, when you turn towards God,[9] all humiliation disappears from your face.[10]God's forgiveness becomes a song within you.[11]

Giving yourself to Christ, trusting in him, forgiving others, is all one and the same life-giving movement.

When you seek to forgive, you will encounter resistances in yourself. Forgiveness does not come naturally to anyone; it is a pure reality of the Gospel. When you are shaken, hurt and humiliated, will you go on forgiving till your very last ounce of strength?

When you forgive and come up against a refusal, the answer of the Gospel is clear: it involves showing kindness without waiting to be understood, and forgiving in the face of distance and coldness, even to the point of giving up trying to know what the other person will do with your forgiveness.

Is your forgiveness being taken advantage of? The love which forgives is not blind; it bears the stamp of clear-sightedness. Those who forgive are not shielded from suffering when others say to themselves, "I can do anything I like and even break this person – I know they will forgive me in the end anyway."[12]

Forgiveness is a very personal step. It restores us to transparency of heart. Far from leading to a lack of concern for others, it awakens our attention to those who are oppressed, or mistreated, or manipulated. It frees the strength which is needed for an involvement with them.

When wounds of the past are reopened, will you find the courage to forgive even those who are no longer upon this earth?

Are you ready to love only those who love you? Anyone can do as much, and without needing the Gospel. Praying for those who hurt you counts for a lot.[13]

If the love which forgives became a burning flame within you, your heart would emerge through its trials and live again. ▷

7. The Gospel calls us to forgive nd without putting it off until later. Christ ays this clearly, "If you are offering your gift t the altar and there remember that someone as something against you, first go and be reonciled" (Mat 5.23-24).

8. Some think that for a human eing to be freed from guilt it is necessary to minimize sin or even deny its existence. Rather han delivering from guilt, such an attitude can ead to a guilt-feeling being diffused throughout one's being and becoming so all-pervasive hat it cannot be pinned down. Others accuse themselves of everything imaginable and, as if n order to "put themselves in the clear" with God, become wrapped up in endless acts of atonement. The way of the Gospel is neither of these two.

In the Gospel, the parable of the prodigal son illustrates clearly an incredible overturning of the usual order of things. As soon as the father sees his son he runs towards him. It was undignified at that time for a grown man to run, nevertheless he does so. The son says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son...", but the father does not let him get any further. He clothes him with the best robe and puts a ring of celebration on his finger (Luke 15). By his forgiveness, the father places before his son a fresh open space, an expanse of freedom. The father's joy rings out because his son is there and their communion is recovered. God's forgiveness frees captive energy in us for creating with him. "When forgiveness is given, one no longer offers any sacrifice for sin" (Hebrews 10.18).

9. In the Gospel, turning to God, repentance and conversion are all one and the same thing (Mark 1.15).

10. Psalm 34.6

11. Many receive the sacrament of reconciliation, and when it is received in repentance of heart, it frees from doubt and gives a personal certainty of God's forgiveness. "Though our faults overpower us, you blot them out" (Psalm 65.3).

12. Forgiving does not mean taking the easy way out. People can take advantage of forgiveness, just as trust can also be abused, and this cuts to the quick like nothing else. When the dizzy spiral of human ambition takes control of a person, it becomes a drug which poisons the soul. It leads them to dominate others in private, and even to reason cynically, "Why shouldn't I carry on with my plans, even if it means trampling this person underfoot, since because of Christ they are sure to forgive me?"

13. The Gospel calls us to pray for others, even for our enemies (Matthew 5.43), and to entrust to God those who oppose us. But when we pray for another and their heart does not change, does that mean that God is not answering our prayer? No, unanswered prayer does not exist. God answers within us. When in prayer we entrust another person to God, something is changed within us. A kind-hearted way of looking at others does not prevent us from being clear-sighted. We continue to see the rough edges in the other person and the areas which are unapproachable. But we take the risk of seeing also the good which they do not see in themselves.

During your inner struggles, God was present without you knowing.

As you advance without seeing, as if shrouded in darkness, what struggles you pass through! Striving, not so much against doubt, but to be found faithful and to dare to give yourself right to the very end in a *yes* for life.

Some think that only outstanding people are able to take on the commitment to such a *yes*. But every person, each with his or her humanity, can create in God a lifelong commitment.

For those who choose to follow Christ, a *yes* and a *no* sometimes wrestle within. Any choice means deciding from among various options, while it is natural to want to have everything and not give up anything.

Through the *yes* of faith, the *yes* of trust in God, the Risen Christ makes you fully alive, he wishes you upright,[14] not swaying in one direction and then another. By remaining faithful, you express to God the absolute nature of your love.

In their inner struggle, no-one is abandoned to a desert of loneliness. From the time of his resurrection, by his Holy Spirit, Christ Jesus' mysterious presence has taken form in a visible communion, the Church. Gathering women and men "from all peoples, he has made them mystically into his own Body."[15] With this communion in the Body of Christ, God is offering you a foundation for the whole of your life.[16]

Because of Christ and the Gospel, will you prepare yourself every morning to forgive? As you do, you will see a space of freedom opening out before you which no-one can take away. From now on, seeking to create with God, will you go forward in simplicity with what you have already understood?

For trust to become a reality in the world, in the East or the West, in the North or South, your life and the lives of a multitude will be needed. A lifelong experience is not necessary in order to begin, nor the understanding that comes with accumulated knowledge. How could you be at peace as long as you have not found where to rest your heart? □

14. God wants human beings to stand and not to lie crushed. God has no need for human beings to be humiliated for the radiance of his presence to shine forth.

15. Lumen Gentium ch. 1, par. 7

16. "We are probably not immune from all responsibility for the fact that especially the young critically consider the Church a mere institution. Have we not perhaps favoured this opinion in them by speaking too much of renewal of the Church's external structure and too little of God and of Christ?"

The Church makes herself more credible if she speaks less of herself and ever more preaches Christ crucified (cf. 1 Co 2,2) and witnesses with her own life.

Jesus Christ is ever present in his Church and lives in her as risen.

Just as we believe in one God alone, and one mediator, Jesus Christ, in one Spirit, so we have but one baptism and one Eucharist with which the unity and uniqueness of the Church are signified and built up. This is of great importance especially today, because the Church in as much as she is one and unique, is as a sacrament, a sign and instrument of unity and of reconciliation, of peace among men, nations, classes and peoples.

Because the Church is communion, the new "basic communities", if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are thus cause for great hope for the life of the Church." (Synod, 1985)

In a city neighbourhood in India

La Vie – J. Houze

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the underlined one is suggested. The reference in italics shows the source of the short reading.

Sat 1 The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in time of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, Lord, for you never forsake those who seek you.
Ps 9 • Jeremiah 18.18-20 • John 12.1-11

SUN 2 The Lord said to Moses: I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors and know all their suffering.
Exodus 3.1-15 • 1 Corinthians 10.1-12 • Luke 13.6-9

Mon 3 Jeremiah said: The word of the Lord has caused me to be the object of insult and ridicule. So I said to myself, "I will not think about him any more, I will no longer speak in his name", but there seemed to be a burning fire in my heart which I could not contain.
Jer 20.7-9 • Hebrews 2.10-18 • Jn 12.12-19

Tue 4 Encourage each other every day, so that none of you become hardened by the deceit of sin. For we shall come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the trust we had at first.
Jer 22.1-3 • *Heb 3.5-14* • Jn 12.20-25

Wed 5 Jesus is well able to understand our weakness, for he was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. Let us then be confident in approaching God who gives his help and mercy.
Jer 23.1-6 • *Heb 4.12-16* • Jn 12.26-32

Thu 6 Jesus said to his disciples: Believe in the light, so as to become children of light.
Jer 29.11-14 • Heb 5.5-9 • *Jn 12.35-43*

Fri 7 God has made us an unalterable promise so that we may be encouraged to seize firmly the hope offered to us. This hope is like an anchor for our souls.
Jer 30.12-13,17-19 • *Heb 6.10-20* • Jn 12.44-50

Sat 8 Jesus said: I am the true vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
Jer 31.3-6 • *Jn 15.1-8*

SUN 9 In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself, and has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation.
Hosuah 5.10-12 • *2 Co 5.17-21* • Lk 15.1-32

Mon 10 Jesus said to his disciples: I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, because everything I learned from my Father I have made known to you.
Jer 31.8-9 • Heb 7.22-25 • *Jn 15.9-17*

Tue 11 The Lord says: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds. Their sins and offenses I will remember no more.
Jer 31.11-13 • *Heb 10.14-18* • Jn 15.18-16.4

Wed 12 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for the one who has promised is faithful.
Jer 31.15-20 • *Heb 10.22-25* • Jn 17.1-8

Thu 13 Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: I am no longer in the world, they are in the world, and I am coming to you ; Holy Father, keep them in your name, so that they may be one like us.
Job 1.20-22 • Heb 10.32-38a • *Jn 17.9-19*

Fri 14 By faith, Abraham, when called to set out for a country he was to inherit, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
Job 2.1-10 • *Heb 11.1-10* • Jn 17.20-26

The Letter to the Hebrews

Where can we find the courage to be faithful to God our whole life long ? The author of a letter written to Christians of Jewish background answers: by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (12.2). But how is Jesus able to do this for us ? The answer to this question begins with a reflection on the institution of the Jewish priesthood.

The Jewish high priest was an intermediary between the nation and God. On the one hand he interceded for his people before the Lord, and on the other he communicated God's blessing, and especially his forgiveness, to his compatriots. But he was only an ordinary man, fallible and mortal (5.1-3), and therefore incapable of creating by himself an unbreakable communion between God and humankind.

Jesus was not a priest in the Jewish way. But as the Son of God (1.1-3) and at the same time as someone who lived our human condition to the very end (2.14-18), Jesus is the fulfillment of what the priesthood was only a "shadow" (10.1), that is, a new covenant, the fullness of a communion. The Son is greater than all of creation (1.5-14), but he became like us in order to live out trust in God as a human being (5.7-8), to experience our weaknesses from within (4.14-16).

Instead of offering merely exterior sacrifices, Jesus gave himself for us in an attitude of total availability to his Father (10.10-18). By his self-giving he opened "a new and living way" to God (10.19-20). It is up to us simply to remain faithful on this road already laid out for us (10.32-39), to live like pilgrims looking for our true home (11.13-16 ; 13.14), to make our lives a "sacrifice" of praise and sharing (13.15-16). Our hope is trustworthy (6.13-20), because our guide (2.10) and shepherd (13.20) has already gone before us.

Sat 15 Jesus said: The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.
Job 6.11-21 • *Lk 11.33-36*

SUN 16 Paul wrote: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death so as to rise from among the dead.
Isaiah 43.16-21 • *Ph 3.8-14* • Jn 8.1-11

Mon 17 Our predecessors in the faith recognized that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. Thus, they made it plain that they were in search of their real homeland. And God has prepared a city for them.
Job 12.4-5, 13.1-8 • *Heb 11.13-16* • Lk 12.33-34,49-50

Tue 18 Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race which has been marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith.
Job 16.16-22 • *Heb 11.35b-12.3* • Lk 13.31-35

Wed 19 Job said: I know that my defender lives. From my flesh I shall see God and the one on whom my eyes look will be no stranger.
Job 19.23-27 • Heb 12.12-15 • Lk 14.25-33

Thu 20 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.
Job 23.3-12 • *Heb 12.28-13.8* • Matthew 20.25-28

Fri 21 Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy.
Job 28.12-28 • Heb 13.12-21 • *Jn 16.16-22*

Sat 22 You hear the desire of the humble, Lord, you encourage them and listen to their cry.
Ps 10 • Job 42.1-5 • Jn 16.23-33

SUN 23 PALM SUNDAY
Rejoice and cry out with gladness ! See, your king is coming, just and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey.
Zechariah 9.9-10 • Ph 2.6-11 • Lk 19.28-40

Mon 24 Jesus prayed: Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me ! Yet not as I will, but as you will.
Mt 26.30-46 • Mt 26.47-75

Tue 25 On the cross, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: My God, my God, why have you deserted me ?
Mt 27.11-36 • *Mt 27.35-61*

Wed 26 On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing.
Lk 23.33-49 • Jn 18.1-27

Thu 27 Jesus said to his disciples: Who is greater: the one who sits at table or the one who serves ? The one at table, surely ? Yet I am among you as one who serves.
Lk 22.7-34 • 1 Co 11.23-26 • Jn 13.1-15

Fri 28 Carrying his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to the place known as Golgotha where they crucified him.
Jn 19.1-16 • *Jn 19.17-42*

Sat 29 Christ was put to death in the body, and raised to life in the Spirit. And in the Spirit he also went to announce the good news to those who once had refused to believe.
1 Peter 3.18-22 • Mt 27.62-66 • Job 19.25-26

SUN 30 EASTER
When he entered the empty tomb, Jesus' disciple saw and believed.
Colossians 3.1-4 • *Jn 20.1-10* • Lk 24.13-27

Mon 31 When he was at table with two disciples, the Risen Christ took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread and began to give it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.
Acts 2.42-47 • Col 1.1-6 • *Lk 24.28-34*

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Sat 1 You hold me by my hand, Lord, and guide me with your counsel. If I am with you, I desire nothing upon the the earth.
Ps 73 • Ze 8.1-8 • Jn 6.41-50

SUN 2 PRESENTATION OF THE LORD
When Simeon saw the child Jesus, he praised God and said: Now, Lord, you can let your servant depart in peace, according to your word. For my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all people to see.
Malachi 3.1-4 • Hebrews 2.14-18 • *Lk 2.22-40*

Mon 3 Jesus said: I am the living bread, come down from from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.
Ze 8.12-13,16-17a • Ga 2.16-21 • *Jn 6.51-58*

ma 4 Seeing that many were leaving him, Jesus said to his disciples, « What about you, do you also want to leave ? » Peter replied, « To whom could we go, Lord ? You have the words of eternal life. »
Ze 9.9-10 • Ga 3.1-9 • *Jn 6.60-69*

Wed 5 Paul wrote: There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
Ze 12.10,13.1 • *Ga 3.23-29* • Jn 7.14-18

Thu 6 God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, « Father ! »
Ze 14.7-10 • *Ga 4.1-7* • Jn 7.24-30

Fri 7 God said to Jeremiah: Go to everyone I send you to. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you.
Jeremiah 1.4-10 • Ga 5.1,13-18 • Jn 7.37-44

Sat 8 The Lord says: I watch over my word to see it fulfilled.
Jr 1.11-12,17-19 • Jn 8.1-11

SUN 9 Jesus said to Simon Peter, « Put out into deep water, and let down your nets for a catch. » « Master, » Simon answered, « we have worked hard all night without catching anything ; but because you say so, I will let down the nets. » And having done this, they caught a great quantity of fish.
Is 6.1-8 • 1 Cor 15.1-11 • *Lk 5.1-11*

Mon 10 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there can be no law.
Jr 2.1-5 • *Ga 5.22-25* • Jn 8.12-16

ma 11 Bear one another's burdens, and fulfil in this way the law of Christ.
Jr 2.10-13 • *Ga 6.1-5* • Jn 8.26b-30

Wed 12 ASH WEDNESDAY
God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them, and he has entrustd to us this message of reconciliation.
Joel 2.12-13 • *2 Cor 5.18-6.2* • Mt 6.1-6,16-18

Thu 13 Let us not become weary in doing good, the harvest will come in its good time, if we do not give up.
Jr 3.12-17 • *Ga 6.6-10* • Jn 8.31-36

Fri 14 The Lord says: Walk in the way of good, and you will find rest for your souls.
Jr 6.14-16 • Ga 6.14-18 • Jn 8.50-54,56-59

Sat 15 Jesus is well able to understand our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet was without sin. So let us approach God with confidence, that we may receive mercy and his grace to help us.
Jr 7.1-7 • *Hebrews 4.12-16*

The book of the prophet Jeremiah

On the eve of the exile to Babylon, a great prophet arose in Israel. His name was Jeremiah, and he allowed his people to grasp the meaning in God of the difficult events they were soon going to pass through. He did this not only by what he said, but even more by what he was. His own life was a kind of anticipation of the fate of his people and the identity of his God.

First of all, Jeremiah realized that the nation was diseased. In the old days the people followed the Lord and loved him like a bride her husband (2.1-5), but now she is unfaithful: "my people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols...they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (2.10-13). People count on the Lord's presence in the Temple, without realizing that they also have to do what the Lord requires: "do not oppress the foreigner, the orphan and the widow and shed no innocent blood..." (7.6). That is what knowing God means (22.15-17), and it is the only thing that really matters (9.22-23).

The people, with no good shepherds to lead them (23.1-6), no longer walk in "the ancient paths...the good way" (6.16). They feel that God has abandoned them (8.19), that the Lord is "like a stranger in the land" (14.8). The prophet himself also has the impression of God's absence (15.11-21) and yet he continues to proclaim the divine Word (20.7-9) and to preach trust in God (17.5-8). In addition, though his own friends attack him (18.18-20) and he is forsaken just like his Lord, Jeremiah remains in solidarity with them, suffering more than any of them from the situation (8.22-23 ; 15.18). In his own being, and without realizing it fully, he lives the covenant, the mystery of communion between God and humanity. And so he is sure, in the midst of the darkest night, that God will give his people "a future and hope" (29.11), and will heal their incurable wound (30.12,17 ; cf. 8.22 ; 15,18).

SUN 16 Paul wrote: There is no difference between persons — all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.
Deuteronomy 26.4-10 • *Romans 10.8-13* • Luke 4.1-13

Mon 17 Paul wrote: You have imitated the Lord by welcoming the word, despite severe suffering, with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.
Jer 7.22-25 • *1 Thess. 1.1-7* • Jn 9.1-9

Tue 18 Paul wrote: God entrusted us with the good news of the Gospel, and so when we speak we are not trying to please people but God, who knows our hearts.
Jer 8.4-7 • *1 Th 2.1-7a* • Jn 9.24-38

Wed 19 Jesus said: I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
Jer 8.18-23 • 1 Th 2.7b-13 • *Jn 10.1-10*

Thu 20 May God make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone ; may he confirm your hearts.
Jer 9.22-23 • *1 Th 3.6-13* • Jn 10.11-15

Fri 21 The one who delights in the law of the Lord is like a tree which is planted by streams of water: it gives its fruit in season and its leaves never wither.
Ps 1 • Jer 11.19, 12.1-3a • 1 Th 4.1-12 • Jn 10.16-21

Sat 22 Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice and I give them eternal life, they will never perish. No-one can snatch anything out of the Father's hand.
Jer 14.7-9 • *Jn 10.22-30*

SUN 23 Paul wrote: Our citizenship is heaven. And from there we eagerly await the Saviour: our Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours to be come like his glorious body.
Genesis 15.5-6 • *Philippians 3.17-4.1* • Lk 9.28b-36

Mon 24 Many are asking: "Who can give us happiness ?" Lord, may the light of your face shine upon us.
Ps 4 • Jer 14.19-22 • 1 Th 4.13-18 • Jn 10.37-42

Tue 25 The Lord says: I am with you to save you and free you.
Jer 15.11-21 • 1 Th 5.1-6 • Jn 11.1-16

Wed 26 Be patient with all. See that no-one pays back wrong for wrong, but always seek what is good, both for each other and for everyone.
Jer 17.5-8 • *1 Th 5.9-15* • Jn 11.17-27

Thu 27 Heal me, Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me and I shall be saved, for you are my praise !
Jer 17.14-17 • 1 Th 5.16-24 • Jn 11.28-44

Fri 28 It is to you I pray, Lord, day by day you listen to me. At dawn I hold myself in readiness for you, and remain watchful.
Ps 5 • Jer 18.1-6 • Heb 1.1-3 • Jn 11.45-53

Letter to a small community

If it is rooted in the wider local church community, a small ommunity can be capable of taking risks and of resisting the ertia of discouragement. Even a very few people, three at e least, ten at the most, suffice for such a community to be living sign of Christ, he who gathers us together in order for s to go towards all of humanity.

The Church is a unique communion which begins there here one lives. Every home, even if only a single room, can e a "household-church". But if that led one to turn in upon neself, either alone or as a group, it would be causing yet nother division. Making your home a household-church ways involves being ready to go to join the local community believers where they meet. Otherwise the breath of niversality, which means that the Church is a leaven and the ul of society, will be lost.

If local church communities, often called "parishes", uld suggest or entrust tasks and responsibilities to the various nall communities in their neighbourhood, then a diversity of tion would be expressed: some would be asked to visit other mmunities, others to be particularly attentive to the very or and isolated, or children who suffer because of broken milies, or cultural minorities, or unemployed people who are xious for their future. Diversity can be constructive if it mulates us to seek the unanimity of faith.

If small provisional communities went, at least once a eek, to join the prayer of the local church community, it uld help us, by a celebration that gathers people of all ages cluding children and old people, to sense the universality of r communion together. A simple prayer of praise can have eat beauty, above all through the singing.

t present, many people are asking themselves the same estion: How, for the sake of Christ and for the Gospel, can e remain with an ardent expectation in the midst of the uations we find in the world today?

How? Would it be by plunging ourselves into the nditions suffered by those who have been left forgotten, by eking to restore human dignity and to topple the power of justice? Yes, but that is not all there is to the Gospel.

Would it be by dedicating our energy towards a more ual sharing of the world's wealth, which is such a ndamental prerequisite for world peace? Yes, most rtainly. But that is not yet the whole of the Gospel.

What is essential in the Gospel is for human beings to come awakened to the meaning of their life.

It is also the opening of a mysterious way for us to be able share willingly in the passion and resurrection of Christ Jesus, d to draw nearer to saintliness so that the roots of evil in us be rned away. The Risen Christ makes each one of us fully alive. accompanies human beings during their life on earth as well in eternal life; until the end of time, he suffers mystically with those who are enduring trials.

What is essential in the Gospel is also the serene expectant iting with which it is possible, even without recognizing him, remain beside the One who is risen during long silences en nothing seems to be happening. And, at the very heart of r daily struggles, in the watchfulness of prayer, telling him erything and letting him sing within us his gift of life. It is re, with him, that life's most significant decisions take ape. There the dizziness of our hesitations is cleared. There it possible to prepare ourselves to trust, day by day, in the stery of faith.

To those who wait on God, a secret is disclosed, nething of the Kingdom which is hidden from our eyes: t a believer awakens others to God above all by his or her n life and that, even if God remains beyond our derstanding, a human being finds fulfilment only in his sence; whoever looks to him will be transfigured, and all rterness wiped from their face.

Letter to children and those who know how to listen to them

If every day were to become like a Christmas night... While you are still young, you can already be an ambassador of trust and a person who sows forgiveness.

Some actions can speak for themselves. For example, when you have offended someone close to you, will you dare to offer them the palm of your hand for them to trace out there with their finger the sign of the cross?

Many of you have experienced being left abandoned by others. To those your own age who have been hurt by family break-ups, your presence could be so essential.

Work schedules are sometimes very demanding and leave hardly any time for people to pray together. Couldn't you then prepare a prayer in your home for your family?

As you grow older, you may at times be troubled by what you discover in yourself and in others. It can then be a liberation to confide in someone who listens, someone who, with the perspective of age, seeks to listen to you disinterestedly.

Those of you who with passing years have acquired a spirit of discernment — women and men in all parts of the world — are many in number. You are able to understand what lies in the heart of a child or a young person.

Will you help those to whom you listen look at themselves, and others too, in the light of the kindliness with which God loves us?

If you could only communicate to them a peaceful confidence that the past is buried in the heart of God and that, day by day, he takes care of our future.

If all of us — children, women and men of all ages — tried to live in this confidence, each day would be lit up like Christmas night. □

Summer 1987: Intercontinental Meetings at Taizé

As already announced, Intercontinental Meetings will be held at Taizé during summer 1987. The meetings will stretch from mid-July to early September. It will be possible to participate for a period of either 10 days or two weeks. Highly qualified scholars and researchers in the arts and sciences, particularly in the fields of nuclear science, nutrition and world economy, will be invited for each period.

With an inventive spirit nourished by faith, we shall be seeking ways to bring about a civilization founded on sharing and trust. Everyone is invited to send to Taizé suggestions and replies concerning the 6 questions on the U.N. that regard the major questions of today. Conclusions will evolve in time for the 1987 Intercontinental Meetings. We have been assured that they will be considered attentively at the U.N.

To respond to the challenges of today's world, how can the Church, reconciled in itself, be a mystery of communion; the communion that exists between God and human beings? How, with the involvement of believers and non-believers, can the Church "serve as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family"?

In addition, the "Letter to a small community" asks those who are preparing for the 1987 Intercontinental Meetings to begin straightaway to involve themselves in small provisional communities (using their own names and not the name "Taizé"): not necessarily where people live all in the same place, but where they can search together with others for a foundation for the whole of their life.

Six questions for the United Nations : On July 2nd 1985 Brother Roger, accompanied by seven children, one a five-month old baby, went to GENEVA to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Being of Indian, Colombian, African, Lebanese, European and Moroccan-Muslim origins, the children reflected the diversity of the whole world.

Brother Roger submitted six questions to Mr. Perez de CUELLAR. They expressed the aspirations of young people on all continents that the U.N. become a catalyst of trust between peoples. It is essential that, in the 130 countries to which the LETTER FROM TAIZE is sent, people work on these six questions up to the World Meeting which will be held at Taizé in summer 1987. Once sent to Taizé, the suggestions from young people will be summarized and submitted to the U.N. Mr. Perez de Cuellar has promised that they will be taken seriously.

These are the six questions taken to Geneva by Brother Roger

Will young people have the courage to be ambassadors of trust?

Young people of every continent, who bear an ardent desire for peace within them, are searching for a way to establish trust across the earth. They want to make sure that today's children and young people do not, one day, have to live in lands of darkness where death reigns. It is for those who have no way of letting their voice be heard concerning the threats which hang over their future that, I, an old man, together with children, have come to submit to the UN these questions which express the aspirations of a multitude of young people.

1 **What fundamental changes can be suggested so that the UN may become a place where there is an eagerness to create trust between all peoples?**

How may a watch council be set up, ready to act at all times and with the necessary authority to prevent wars from breaking out? Once begun, nothing is more difficult to stop than war.

What ways can be found to ensure that the UN does not serve as a platform for political disputes and rivalries, nor become a place where people seek to humiliate others?

Whole peoples can be humiliated when programs that aim at a fairer distribution of the world's wealth come to nothing, or when the concentration of huge capital resources in the hands of a few gives individuals or groups vast power. In both these cases, those who are humiliated seek to get even. Humiliation often leads governments to build up enormous military strength in order to compel the respect of others. The rapid developments in military technology lead inevitably to the manufacture of weapons which are more and more economically ruinous. The tightening noose of spiralling expenditure which is thereby caused exhausts the resources which are so badly needed by all peoples.

2 **What guarantees can national leaders give that they will not abuse the confidence of peoples?** Establishing trust throughout the earth requires clear-sightedness, a clear-sightedness that knows that trust can also be misused.

What changes can be suggested to every member nation of the UN, so that all prestige-spending be abandoned and these resources diverted to more important needs, especially the needs of those who live in poverty? In addition, will all those in positions of political authority decide once and for all to refuse any cult of their personality and all means of domination?

Many of the young are tired of the attacks by which politicians distort the intentions of their opposite numbers, attacks which can include defamation of character, and sometimes brutality. One of the consequences is the sowing of scepticism among young people, making many of them lose all eagerness to look for creative solutions.

3 An equitable distribution of material wealth in the world is one precondition for peace. **It is essential to recognise new economic rights which cover housing, health, and adequate nutrition, placed on the same level as all other human rights.** These rights presuppose that personal initiative can be exercised, but within established limits.

4 The fact that science and technology can be used to destroy a whole section of humanity fuels a violent crisis of trust. Nations begin to be frightened of one another, and political leaders are not exempt from this fear. It results in people turning in upon themselves, their creativity frozen by fright.

Yet all peoples desire peace, and not war, torture, and concentration camps. It is true that in every nation there is a small proportion of people who wish to impose an expansionist process, or who can, if they hold the reins of power, cynically set in motion the wheels of death.

In the absence of a vast human hope, the younger generations are no longer stimulated to participate in the building up of the human community.

Confronted by emptiness, many young people are scarred by apathy and disillusionment, and they start looking for distractions that anaesthetize an intolerable anxiety.

However difficult it is, it is essential to undertake a total disarmament in the world without delay. The creation of a peace army, dependent on the United Nations' watch council and equipped in the most effective way, is indispensable, in order to be capable of intervening, at any moment, anywhere in the world, to guarantee the maintenance of peace.

With regard to disarmament, **it is obvious that the complex situation cannot be dealt with by simplistic or illusory answers.** The United Nations alone is capable of assuming responsibility for the negociations so urgently needed to bring about a general disarmament. Bargaining for limited disarmament generally leads to never-ending discussions while a situation of permanent insecurity continues to reign.

5 Science and technology can either destroy or build. **How can all the resources freed by disarmament be used to help a humanity which is increasing in number each day;** for example by discovering methods of intensive food production adapted to local situations, or finding ways to alleviate or heal physical and mental suffering, or providing a dwelling for everyone? What things are essential for the UN to be able to give the younger generations the chance to contribute to the development of the whole world, stimulating at the same time a passionate interest in the human person?

6 **Many young people will have the necessary courage to be ambassadors of trust** in places where there is mistrust and bearers of peace where there is humiliation.

Will adults be ready to commit themselves to support the young people, and to lead the way for indispensable changes to be made in the UN? Do they realize that so many young people are eagerly waiting to be transformed by enthusiasm? An enthusiasm for a vital mission: that of making the world a place fit to live in, and of fostering trust between the people of the earth.

rother Roger creates Ghandhi Prize and nnounces the setting up of n Intercontinental Council or Sharing

a letter drafted on the last day that he was in Madras, other Roger writes: on Christmas Eve, in the tiny house ere we were staying in Madras, with a small slum tight up inst it, I was very preoccupied with what we were living h our neighbours. It was at that moment that I told myself, hat risk can we take?» Until that 24th December, I had ver dreamt of either of the two projects which follow:

An Intercontinental Council for Sharing

hen the human family is plunged into enormous tensions, en miserable poverty goes side by side with immense lividual wealth, and when the population growth rate in tain countries is on the increase as it is in India by 20 llion each year, then a sharing of material and cultural ods is demanded by conscience. A sharing which miliates no one but which supports everything that omotes human dignity, trust and peace on earth. With men, men, young people and children of every continent, shall be searching for the way which permits us to go the thest possible in this sharing.

Appeals and fund raising for the sharing of material ods are becoming more and more frequent, but at the same ne reservations towards them are emerging. Many people ubt whether the funds gathered by certain appeals reach thentic development projects which make possible paid ployment (where it is needed) and which cover the vital cessities of food, clothing, lodging, education, medical e, etc.

In Asia, a competent man who, in his own country, is in arge of the distribution of funds coming from appeals, said: is often the cleverest ones who already have a house who nage to get a second one through donations.»

Rather than getting discouraged, or worse still, giving rselves alibis for selfishly holding back our resources, it is portant to try to give assurances about the appeals that are e. They do exist.

To arrive at a vast sharing on all the continents, mpetent women and men of all ages are needed. So many ilts, young people and even children are eager to take part a huge sharing effort, and without any age-segregation. r example, there are people who are retiring and who are en full of energy for a worthwhile cause.

A council is going to be created to stimulate rticipation from all the continents and to sum up the best of suggestions. It will be called the INTERCONTINENTAL UNCIL FOR SHARING. It will begin working in umn 1987, following the intercontinental meetings which l take place in Taizé during the summer of 1987. Before t, a secretariate will be set up on each continent: in ia,in Bombay; in Africa,in Kinshasa; in Europe,if possible Warsaw; in Latin America,in Caracas; in North nerica,in New York; in Australia-in Melbourne, with ional secretariates in other places.

First of all, it is a question of supporting what exists rather than creating a new appeal. The INTERCONTINENTAL COUNCIL FOR SHARING will accept no donations for itself, no gifts, nothing. Rather, it will direct people who want to give towards the most reliable of what exists. Obviously, secretariates involve travel expenses and a minimum to live on for those who run them. The costs cannot be covered by an appeal for donations. Communities living uniquely off their own work and accepting no gifts for themselves, not even their own family inheritances, in a word, who accept nothing, will meet the material costs.

There remains the enormous question of cultural sharing. Every country in the world has its own particular cultural gifts. To discover ways for this sharing to take place, it would be preferable to rely on a large existing organisation, UNESCO, considering that here too it is a question of bringing forth the best of what already exists. This organisation is currently going through a crisis but is trying to re-establish a balance. If necessary, other avenues could be explored with a view to the sharing of cultures. In autumn 1987, it will be possible to say in which direction to move with regard to this question.

The Gandhi Prize

Also on Christmas Eve, I was wondering how we could encourage someone or a body of people who dedicate themselves to establishing trust between all peoples, to bringing forth reconciliation and to promoting sharing of goods. The idea came of establishing a prize which will be given every January 1st. The prize bears the name of the Mahatma Gandhi; it is called the GANDHI PRIZE.

This January 1st, the prize has been given to a Polish lady from Warsaw, Aniela Urbanowicz, born in 1899. Without counting the cost, she gave herself in the Polish resistance during the Second World War. During the bombing, she saved human lives, while her own husband and daughter were dying in Auschwitz. Even today, in her old age, she is still giving the best of herself to sustain a fine human hope among many people.

P.S. Two examples of suggestions which the INTERCONTINENTAL COUNCIL FOR SHARING could make to large fund raisers which exist:
– $8000 -£6000 can hire a ship to transport medicines and concentrated food to a Caribbean island or elsewhere. Fourteen unemployed people could commit themselves to the project and thus learn the profession of merchant seaman, which takes about three months.
– Regarding cultural sharing, young unemployed women and men could be invited to a foreign country where they could learn the language during a period of six to eight months. □

A telegram from Pope John-Paul II to Brother Roger

"The Holy Father, having been informed about the gatherings of young adults in Madras and Barcelona held at the initiative of the Community of Taize, encourages them to accomplish gestures of trust, reconciliation, forgiveness and justice all around them, gestures inspired by the love which comes from God and which prayer strengthens in our hearts so that the world may become a place fit to live in. The Pope tells them that we are not condemned to divisions and wars but that we are called to live in brotherhood and peace. The human being is not created by God for hatred and mistrust but is made for the love God."

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